

STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. I-39-00

June 22, 2000

The following is offered in response to your letter in which you seek official interpretations of the provisions of Section 1610.0 of the BOCA National Building Code/1996 portion of the 1999 State Building Code.

Question One: In determining the occupancy of a building for the purposes of assigning a Seismic Hazard Exposure Group, in accordance with Table 1610.1.5, does one use the occupancy calculated in accordance with Table 1008.1.2 of the referenced code, or the actual anticipated occupancy?

Answer One: The occupancy referenced in Table 1610.1.5 must be based on the calculated occupancy derived from Table 1008.1.2. This table provides the only reliable methodology to determine occupancy for issues such as means of egress, plumbing fixtures and other occupancy related code provisions. Using an occupancy load stated by the owner or designer of the premises that is less than the tabular occupancy will not result in an accurate expected occupancy for the life of the building. Section 1008.1 only allows the use of actual occupant load when it results in a larger occupancy than that calculated by Table 1008.1.2.

Question Two: An addition is proposed to a Use Group B building that is currently in Seismic Hazard Exposure Group I based on occupancy of less than 5000. The addition will increase the occupancy of the building to greater than 5000. Does the code require that the entire building be upgraded to Seismic Hazard Exposure Group II requirements, or does only the new construction need to meet those requirements?

Answer Two: The exception to Section 1610.1.2 provides the answer to this question. In seismic areas having an A_v of less than 0.15 (this applies to the entire State of Connecticut), upgrading an existing building undergoing a change of occupancy is not required where the change of occupancy results in a building being reclassified from Seismic Hazard Exposure Group I to Seismic Hazard Exposure Group II. Since the addition you propose would result in such a change, it is not required to upgrade the existing building to the higher exposure group simply as a result of the change in occupancy. Keep in mind, however, that the provisions of Section 1610.1.1 may require the upgrading of the existing building as a result of the addition.